



The Protector by **chelseapenny**

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Summary: My theory of how Season 3 will play out, also centered around Mileven. Fluffy at first, but then the drama comes in...

1. Chapter 1 updated

Welcome to my theory on Season 3, and my first Mileven story. This story is basically on what I think will happen in Season 3. I hope you enjoy it!

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Chapter 1

RRRRRRRIIIIIINNNNNNGGGG

The final school bell of the year. Summer had officially begun and Mike was ecstatic. With the cheering and commotion in the hallways, Mike drowned out the sound, as he gathered his things. He had one thing on his mind, only one thing mattered to him.

El.

Mike couldn't wait to see her. He pictured her, sitting in the cabin, reading a book or watching TV. Maybe she was doing some schoolwork, to catch up for next year, when she would join them in high school. Mike was over the moon happy: school was out, he was a rising freshman, and he was in love with the most amazing girl in the world.

Mike exited the classroom and maneuvered his way to the front office, where Mr. Clark was checking his mail. "Mr. Clark?" Mike called to his now former science teacher.

"Mike," Mr. Clark responded, "I thought you'd be long gone by now."

"I'm on my way out," Mike said, "I just wanted to swing by and give this back to you." Mike reached in his book bag and pulled out his copy of the AV room key, that Mr. Clark had made for him.

"I almost forgot about it," Mr. Clark said, as he reached for the key, "thank you, Mike"

"No, Mr. Clark," Mike answered, "thank you! You know, for teaching

me about audio visual devices. I can't wait to show what you taught me, to the high school AV club."

"And they will be lucky to have you," Mr. Clark smiled.

Suddenly, Dustin appeared out of nowhere, startling both Mike and Mr. Clark. Dustin appeared to be out of breath, like he ran a marathon.

"Mike," Dustin huffed, "we've been looking for you. It's time for the inaugural summer Dig Dug competition."

"And I'm gonna beat your ass!" Mike heard Max yell down the hall, causing Dustin to snort and Mike rolled his eyes.

"See ya, Mr. Clark," Mike waved, following Dustin to the front door.

"Have a great summer!" Mr. Clark waved back.

"Mike and Dustin met up with Max, who currently had her arms wrapped around Lucas' waist.

"Ugh! PDA PDA!" Dustin exclaimed.

"Shut up, Dustin," Max snapped back. Just then, Will appeared from around the corner.

"Why are we telling Dustin to shut up?" Will asked.

"Because he's calling out Lucas and I hugging," Max said, still attached to Lucas.

"You call that hugging?" Dustin said, waving his hand at the couple, "you're practically sewn to his side."

"She is not," Lucas argued.

"See?" Max interjected.

"Oh please, he's thoroughly enjoying it," Dustin said.

Max stared down Dustin, "Dig Dug...your ass is grass."

Mike had enough of their bickering, "Guys stop! We'll go to the arcade. I just need to call El."

A chorus of "Oooohs" filled the air, causing Mike's face to turn red. Mike and El had been slowly dating since the Snowball, and he was hoping the Party's teasing would stop by now.

"Guys, stop. It's getting old," Mike said.

"But, it's fun!" Dustin laughed.

"For once, Dustin and I agree on something," Max said.

"Ok everyone," Lucas smirked, "let's just chill and wait here, while Mike calls his wifey."

As the party laughed on, Mike walked to the outside payphone, to call El. Wife, he thought, it had a nice ring to it. Of course, deep down Mike wanted to marry El. But, they were still young and were adjusting to the hormonal rollercoaster of being teenagers. Mike had plans for him and El, this summer. He had saved up his allowance, since the Snowball, so he could take her out on dates, just the two of them. He mentally went through his list of ideas, as he dialed her number. His plan was simple: picnic for their first date. It was romantic, the weather was finally warm, and most important of all, it was a great start on his date budget.

The line rang a few times before a deep, male voice answered.

"Hopper." Mike swallowed. Of course Hopper would answer today, of all days.

"Hi, Hop? It's Mike," his voice trembled a bit. No matter how long he's known Hopper, he still makes Mike tremble in fear.

"Yeah kid," Hopper sighed, "I never would have guessed."

Mike brushed off Hopper's sarcasm. "Is El there?"

"Yes."

Silence. Mike got more nervous.

"C-can I speak with her?"

Hopper decided to have a little fun, "I don't know, kid. Can you?"

"Hop..." Mike huffed.

"Wheeler.." Hopper said firmly, but was laughing on the inside.

Mike then heard the sound of a sweet voice in the background, whining "Daaaad!", which caused Mike's heart to flutter. Her voice, her smile, everything El, always made him melt like a popsicle left out in the sun. Mike knew he had to be respectful to Hopper, for he held the chances for El to see him. Much to El's protests, Mike did agree to always call the cabin first, before he planned to visit. El called it stalling, but Hopper called it manners.

Mike sighed, "May I please speak to El?"

Hopper laughed, "That was fun."

"No, it wasn't," Mike responded.

"EL?!" Hopper intentionally shouted in close proximity of the receiver, which felt like Mike's eardrum had exploded.

"Ow!" Mike exclaimed.

Hopper roared laughing, "Now THAT was fun!"

Mike sighed heavily in annoyance, until El picked up.

"Hi," El said happily.

"Hey," Mike responded, obviously no longer annoyed.

"I miss you," El said. Hopper groaned in the background and said "You just saw him yesterday!"

"Not enough," El responded.

Mike laughed, "I miss you, too. Do you want to come to the arcade with us?"

"El was quiet and then sighed. Mike noticed and was concerned, "El, what's wrong?"

"Hop says I can't go out today, until I finish this eggs ham thing"

"Eggs ham?" Mike was confused, "Did you have breakfast this morning?"

El giggled, "Yes, I did. But this thing consists of a ton of questions."

The lightbulb immediately went off in Mike's head, "Oh! You're taking an exam!"

"Yes, eggs ham!" El said.

Mike tried to hold in his laughter, "It's pronounced ex-am. E-X-A-M. It's a final test of what you have learned throughout the year. I had to take a few of those this past week."

'Oh," El said, "I'm sure you did well. I hate it!"

"I know. We all hate them, but we need them to proceed to the next grade."

"I'd much rather spend time with you."

Mike felt all tingly, as he always did when El asked for him. As much as he want to rush over there and finish the exam for her, he had to hold firm and let her do it herself.

"What are you doing tomorrow?" Mike asked.

"Ummmm," El said, "nothing, so far."

"Well," Mike continued, his voice shaky with nerves. This was it, he was gonna ask El on their first official date.

"Yes, Mike?"

"W-well, I was w-wondering if I could, you know, pick you up tomorrow. At around 11 AM? I, uh....I have a surprise for you."

"A surprise?!" El asked excitedly. Once again, Hopper groaned in the

background.

"Yeah, a surprise. I wanted to take you somewhere. But, I'm not gonna tell you anything else, as it's a surprise."

El squealed in delight, "Like a date?!"

"Uh, yeah!" Mike squeaked.

"DATE?!" Mike heard Hopper boom in the background.

Uh oh. Mike swallowed hard again. Maybe he should have asked Hopper first.

"Dad?!" El exclaimed.

"Finish your test. Let me talk to Wheeler," Mike heard Hopper say.

"But Dad-"

"Now, young lady."

El sighed and gave the phone to Hopper and sulked back over to the table.

"Wheeler." Hopper said firmly.

"Y-yes sir?" Mike stuttered. Nearby, the Party members were eavesdropping on Mike's end of the conversation and they were doing a terrible job holding back their hysterical laughter. Again, Mike's face turned as red as a fire extinguisher. Boy, did he need one to hose him off right then.

"Let's be frank," Hopper said, "what are your intentions with my daughter?"

Mike almost choked on his own spit, "S-sir?!"

"Don't play dumb with me, kid," Hopper continued, "I wasn't born yesterday. I know what's on a young teenage boy's mind, when he asks a girl out."

"N-no sir! I like your daughter. I mean I r-really like her...a lot!"

"And?"

"And....?" Mike stuttered.

"And?" The other Party members said in unison, giggling. Mike wanted to die of embarrassment.

"Sir," Mike continued, "I really like El. And I promise you I would never hurt her. I just want to take her out on a picnic."

Hopper was quiet a moment, contemplating if he should let El go on her first date, at such a young age. On one hand, he wanted El to live a normal, teenage life. But, that would mean allowing her to go on dates with a boy who worshipped El like a wolf worships the moon.

Ok...not an appropriate reference. Still, Mike was a boy, a hormonal teenage boy. Hopper remembered how he was at Mike's age, trying to coax Pam White, the most popular girl in his class, into a game of 7 Minutes in Heaven. However, this was Mike Wheeler, king of the DD empire. If anything, Mike probably wouldn't know what to do with his hands, Hopper chuckled internally.

Hopper gave in, "Ok, kid. You can take her on a picnic."

Mike jumped around, pumping his arms in the air, "Thank you, sir!"

"Hang on, Wheeler. There are a few "Don't be Stupid on a Date" rules," Hopper said firmly.

Mike's nerves returned...what could Hopper possibly think they would be doing? Oh...that, Mike remembered.

"First," Hopper continued, "No powers. I know you two have been hanging out a lot, and she uses them here, but no powers outside this property. Got it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Second, keeps your hands to yourself. I don't need to remind you of Valentine's Day."

"Y-yes, sir," Mike stuttered. How could Mike forget...he almost died

at the hands of Hopper that day. Mike and El were sitting on the couch, enjoying the little heart-shaped candies Mike brought for her. El said she wanted to listen to Mike's heartbeat. Before he could answer, El leaned down and placed her ear to Mike's chest. As much as having El close to him warmed his soul, Mike hormones had other ideas, especially since El rested her hands on his lap. While El listened on and Mike kept thinking of things to *ahem* lower his problem, Hopper walked in. Needless to say, Hopper wasn't thrilled.

"Lastly," Hopper said, "make sure she has fun. And if anything happens, you call me or bring her to the station. I have a shift tomorrow."

"Thank you, sir. Please don't give the surprise away to El. I'll be by to pick her up at 11:00."

"That's fine. Now let her get back to her test. She'll see you tomorrow."

Hopper ended the call, as Mike really wanted to hear El's voice again. Mike felt victorious, like the true Paladin had taken over his soul. For the first time, since Mike first laid eyes upon his beloved El, they were finally going on a date. The summer was off to a great start, and Mike couldn't wait to share it with El.

Mike joined his fellow Party, as they made their way to the bike rack. As they pedaled to the arcade, Mike felt like a king on his high horse. The summer breeze gently caressing his soft, black curls, and the permanent smile that had stuck to his face.

Mike couldn't think of anything that could ruin this perfect summer, to come.

2. Chapter 2

Chapter 2

The arcade was crowded, when the Party arrived, full of overly excited teens that were happy school was out, for the summer. Since Max was kicking their butt at Dig Dug, Dustin decided that a summer Dig Dug competition was in order.

"Ok, everyone knows the rules," Dustin said, "whoever makes the number one spot on the high score list, before the end of the summer, wins."

"And when is considered end of summer?" Lucas asked.

"The night before school starts," Dustin answered.

Will nodded, "I'm fine with that."

"Get ready to lose," Max said as she headed over to the change machine.

"So, it's every party member for themselves?" Lucas asked.

"Yep!" Dustin smiled, "whenever you visit the arcade. And no cheating! Keith is gonna keep watch, if one of you uses some kid to get your high score for you." Dustin gave a small wave to Keith, who just shook his head from behind the counter.

Max came back, with two pockets full of quarters, "Ok let's do this! Ladies first!" she exclaimed as she ran to the Dig Dug machine. Lucas and Dustin quickly followed Max, arguing who was gonna take the next turn. Will made his way to the change machine, when he noticed Mike wasn't following. Will turned to look at Mike, who was standing there, slowly swaying side to side, with a dopey grin on his face.

"Mike?" Will asked.

Mike didn't answer...he was lost in day dream.

"MIKE!" Will exclaimed and clapped his hands, snapping Mike out of

his daze.

"Huh?" Mike mumbled.

"Let me guess..." Will smirked.

Mike's cheeks blushed, as he was a little embarrassed getting caught lost on thought about his beloved.

"Yeah..." Mike said, "I can't help it! She's my world."

Mike's love grin returned and Will groaned in annoyance. Mike slowly followed Will to the change machine. The familiar humming and clanking of dollar bills converting into coins slowly shook Mike back to reality.

"Have you thought about what food you're bring El tomorrow?" Will asked, as he placed his quarters into his pocket.

Mike shifted back and forth on his heels, "Yeah, I've given it some thought. Sandwiches, fruit, cookies, Eggos, you know...the basics. Maybe some fruit punch, or a water thermos."

"What else are you bringing?" Will asked, puzzling Mike.

"What do you mean?" Mike asked.

"Well, your first date with El. Don't you want it to be special?"

"Well, yeah," Mike said confused, "that's why I'm bringing a blanket."

Will stopped and stared at Mike, baffled he hadn't thought this date through, "Mike, a blanket is a basic. You need it to sit on!"

"Ok," Mike said, "so what else do I need?"

"Really?" Will almost laughed, you've been wanting to take El on a date for so long, and you haven't thought this through?"

"Uh..." Mike stammered.

"Max?" Will called out. Max was at the Dig Dug machine, slamming the joysticks furiously, as Dustin and Lucas cheered on.

"I'm kinda busy at the moment!" Max yelled back.

"Mike needs help," Will said. Mike sank down on the bench in embarrassment, hiding his face in his hands.

"You all need help! Busy!" Max yelled, her eyes not leaving the glowing screen.

Will sighed, then shouted, "Mike's not prepared for his date with El!"

The three Party members turned and stared at Mike, who groaned louder and began to turn from a light shade of pink to brick red, in three seconds flat. The game made the familiar turndown sound of a lost game, which Max didn't pay attention. She ran over to Mike and grabbed his arm, pulling him up to stand.

"Let's go, Casanova," Max said.

"Wait, where are we going?" Mike asked, confused by Max swift decision to leave her favorite game.

"Yeah, where are you going?" Lucas asked Max. Max turned to them, still holding Mike by the arm.

"Mike and I are gonna pick up some things, for his date tomorrow," she said, "we'll be right back."

"But the game-" Dustin asked.

"We'll be right back, I promise," Max assured before pulling Mike out the front door. As Lucas and Dustin were staring at the door, trying to process what just transpired, Will snuck around behind them and inserted quarters in the Dig Dug machine. When the familiar, synthesized intro began to play, Dustin quickly spun around.

"Hey!" Dustin whined.

Will smirked as he worked the joysticks, "You were busy."

Lucas laughed as Will's focus went straight to the game. Dustin and Lucas gathered behind Will, to watch him try to beat the high score. Dustin then slammed two quarters down on the machine, slightly

startling Will's concentration.

"I'm next" Dustin said firmly. Will sighed and Lucas chuckled.

"Such a baby," Lucas murmured.

"What?" Dustin asked.

"Nothing!" Lucas smiled, as Will giggled.

Max had pulled Mike out of the arcade and both began walking down the street, towards the historic downtown area. It wasn't too far from the arcade, just a few blocks. Max took the lead as Mike followed, unsure where they were going.

"I really don't need help with this," Mike sighed.

"Oh, yes you do," Max responded.

"I have food! What more do I need?" Mike exclaimed.

"El likes romance," Max stated.

"I'm romantic," Mike said, turning red again, which he seemed to be doing a lot of that lately. Max didn't respond and kept walking. Mike continued to walk behind Max, trying to keep up with her pace. She had a look of determination, which scared Mike a bit. What were they about to do? Was he gonna get some kinds of a makeover? Did El want him to look like one of those guys in her soap operas, who always had chiseled features? Mike didn't think he looked too bad. He was tall, but lanky, and his mom picked out his clothes....Mike smacked his hand to his face.

Oh my God, mom picks out my clothes! I'm officially a dork!

Mike began to feel hot and extremely nervous, breathing rapidly. Max noticed and grabbed Mike's face with both hands, lightly smacking his face.

"Mike," Max said, "you need to calm down."

"What if she hates this date?" Mike panicked.

"She won't hate it," Max assured him, "trust me, she's been wanting

this for a while."

"I'm such a dork," Mike huffed, "what does she see in me?"

Max chuckled, not because Mike was panicking, but both he and El were so cute and so inexperienced, they were made for each other.

"You're her dork," Max said, "she likes you. But, you still need to wow her. She deserves the best."

Max grabbed Mike's wrist and pulled him down the sidewalk. As they made their way to the storefronts, Max stopped in front of a florist.

"Lesson one, Wheeler" Max grinned, "girls like flowers. When I say 'like', I mean we go nuts."

"I gave her flowers on Valentine's day," Mike pointed out, staring at the floral arrangements in the window, "I picked them myself, from my backyard. Don't I get points for that?"

"Yeah, technically those were weeds," Max laughed.

"What?" Mike exclaimed.

"Mike, come on! You are much smarter than that. We took the same science class, remember? Those pretty, tiny yellow 'flowers', as you called them, were technically weeds."

"Well, El liked them," Mike argued, puffing out his chest a little.

"Of course she did. You could give her a pile of sticks and she would gush over how beautiful they are. Don't you want to see her light up even more on this date?"

Mike groaned and continued to stare into the window. He could feel his date budget start to disappear tremendously.

"Listen, I have a budget," Mike pointed out, "and it's supposed to last me until the end of summer. I want to take El on more than one date. Besides, this is technically her first summer, where she's not holed up inside. I want to make it magical for her."

Max couldn't help but gawk at Mike's declaration of El. It was so

adorable. She couldn't just leave him out to do this alone. Max sighed heavily, "Lucky for you, I have a heavy allowance and I don't blow my money on stupid stuff. I'll help you out."

"Really?" Mike questioned, "wait, what's the catch?"

Max smirked at Mike, with a mischievous look, "Oh trust me, I'll think of something. Besides, you guys made it clear on the Party rules. Always help when a Party member requires assistance."

"Thanks, Max," Mike went in for a hug, which Max stepped back.

"Uh uh," Max grimaced, "only Lucas does that."

Mike grinned, "One day, you'll let me hug you."

"But, not today," Max said, as she pushed open the door to the florist shop. As they both entered, Mike couldn't get over the different types of flowers. Daisies, Rose's, peonies, tulips, how on earth was he supposed to choose?

The man behind the counter greeted them both, "Well hello Max! This is a surprise!"

"Hi, Mr. Martin!" Max greeted warmly.

"You two know each other?" Mike asked.

"Of course," Mr. Martin answered, "this sweet little lady is my next door neighbor ."

Max smiled proudly, as Mike caught on. Max knew a florist, a Mike needed flowers, Max wanted to assist in Mike's dilemma. *Perfect!*

"It's nice to meet you. I'm Mike," Mike shook Mr. Martin's hand.

"Likewise, Mike," replied Mr. Martin, "so, what brings you two by today?"

Max looked at Mike, who appeared to be embarrassed to answer Mr. Martin's question. Max spoke up, "Mikey boy here has his first date tomorrow and he needs flowers."

"Awww," Mr. Martin cooed, making Mike blush more, "well you've stumbled upon the right place."

As Mr. Martin grabbed his pad of paper and pen, Mike continued to look nervously around, at the different flowers.

"Mr. Martin, I'll be right back," Max said, going to the front door, "I'm gonna walk next door to Melvald's."

"Ok, Max," Mr. Martin called back, as he was writing something on his paper pad.

"What?" Mike exclaimed, "you're leaving me?"

"Relax, lover boy," Max chuckled, "I'm gonna grab some things." Max then exited and Mike then heard the familiar cling of Melvald's bell, and then hearing Joyce squeal with delight at the sight of Max.

"So," Mr. Martin asked, "first date?"

Mike eyes widened with anxiety, "H-how did you know?"

"Mike, I've been around the block a few times, in my life," Mr. Martin grinned, "until I settled down with the lovely Mrs. Martin."

"Was she your first love?" Mike asked.

"No, we met when I was stationed in Korea, during the war. I got shot in the leg and she was my nurse. Quite a looker." Mr. Martin winked.

Mike rubbed the back of his head and stared at the floor, "Yeah, El is special, too."

"I bet so. Tell me, Mike, when you're around her, how do you feel?"

Mike looked bewildered, "I uh....wait, what does this have to do with flowers?"

Mr. Martin chuckled, "Trust me."

Mike gave it some deep thought. He never really expressed his deep feelings for El aloud before. The Party knew his feelings for her, but

there was more to it.

"Well," Mike began, "she's like the sun. Whenever I see her, I instantly become warm. My life feels whole, when she's around, and empty when she's not. Without her, I feel like a storm is brewing above me."

"Do you love her?" Mr. Martin asked.

Mike shifted a bit, "Yes sir."

"Have you told her yet?"

"Not yet, but do I need to tomorrow? Is that what you do on a first date? What if she doesn't say it back?"

"Mike, you tell her when the moment is right. There is no rush when it comes to love."

Mike watched as Mr. Martin grabbed four pink peonies and a sunflower. Mr. Martin then grabbed a small, short, round vase and filled half of it with water. As Mr. Martin trimmed the stems of the flowers, he explained the arrangement to Mike.

"The four pink peonies represent your blooming relationship with El," Mr. Martin explained, "the reason they are not red is because you haven't expressed your love to her yet. When you do tell her you love her, you present red flowers. The sunflower represents El, your sunshine." Mr. Martin placed the sunflower in the center of the peonies, "your relationship resolves around her, the sun. Hence why the flowers are arranged in this manner."

Mike was speechless, for Mr. Martin's floral representation was accurate. Mike admitted the arrangement with great awe. El was his sun, and his world revolved around her. There was nothing else tying him down. He was free to be with El as they both wished.

"Now," Mr. Martin continued, "what time is your date?"

"11:00 AM," Mike replied.

"Ok, so I'll hold the arrangement here, in our refrigerator and you can come by beforehand, to pick up it up."

"Ok great!"

"Do you have something to carry it in?"

Just as Mike was about to answer, Max walked in, with a paper bag of stuff.

"I have a picnic basket," Mike continued.

"Excellent," Mr. Martin said, "it will sit comfortably in the basket."

Max put down a five dollar bill for Mr. Martin, to pay for the flowers.

"Thank you, kindly!" he responded, as he opened the register. Mike and Max proceeded to exit the shop, waving goodbye to Mr. Martin. Both made their way to a nearby bench, so Mike could see what Max bought.

"What is all this?" Mike asked.

Max grinned as she emptied the contents, out of the paper bag, "Things you will need for tomorrow."

Mike noticed Max had bought paper plates, plastic cups, utensils, a box of chocolate, and a teddy bear. Mike then saw a rectangular box at the bottom of the bag, which was a bit heavier. He picked up the box, which was navy with a silver strip down the middle. As he opened the box, he pulled out a glass bottle with a small, spray nozzle, covered by a metal cap.

Mike groaned in annoyance, " Really Max?!"

"What?" Max laughed.

"COLOGNE?!" Mike yelled.

Max burst out laughing as Mike held the bottle with a death grip, " Men wear cologne on dates."

"Says who?"

"Uh..everyone?! And it was Ms. Byers idea."

"YOU TOLD MS. BYERS?"

"No, Hopper did," Max laughed.

Mike groaned and put the cologne back in the bag, and began to carry it back to the arcade. The good news was he had everything he needed to make El feel special, on their date. The bad news? How was he supposed to act on a date?

3. Chapter 3

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I hope you are enjoying this story! This chapter was fun to write! :)

Chapter 3

Mike rolled over and stared at the glowing numbers, on his alarm clock: 2:38 AM.

He couldn't sleep, for he was too excited, too anxious, and too nervous about the picnic with El. Mike hoped that he had enough supplies, to make their first date a very special one to remember. He stared over at the brown paper bag, sitting at his desk chair. Mike got up from his bed, walked over his desk, and turned on his lamp. He then emptied the contents onto his desk and stared at them. One item in particular: the cologne.

Mike cringed, for he never wore it before. His dad wore it, but Mike didn't feel the need to. One time, when they went to his cousin's wedding, his dad tried spraying it on Mike, and Mike gagged. Mike picked up the bottle and sprayed a bit in the air. As he wafted it to his face, the sharp scent of fresh breeze cotton, with a hint of wood, made his nostrils sting. *This is what girls like?* Mike thought frantically.

Mike crawled back in bed, deciding he would do whatever it took to please and wow El. El deserved every bit of wonder and happiness, and detail was crucial. Mike set his alarm, so he could remember to pack the food and pick up the flowers. Tomorrow would be perfect.

El felt the warm of the sunlight peeking through her window blinds. She was awoken by Hopper's smoker's cough and the smell of Eggos.

"El?" Hopper called out, "breakfast!"

El grabbed her socks and realized what day it was...it was her date with Mike! She was so wrapped up in finishing her final exam yesterday, that she became completely exhausted and went to bed

early. She frantically searched her dresser for the perfect outfit, when Hopper appeared in the doorway, with a plateful of Eggos.

"Whoa, kid! Slow down!" Hopper said to El, "Wheeler won't be here for another 3 hours."

"I haven't even picked out what I'm going to wear!" El exclaimed, as she pulled out a two cardigans and her sandals, "What do you wear on a date?"

Hopper chuckled and continued to watch El run around the room, searching for random articles of clothing. He set down the breakfast plate and placed his hands on her shoulders.

"El," Hopper said softly, "relax."

"But I need-" El stammered.

"Relax," Hopper said again. El took a deep breath and hugged Hopper. Hopper grabbed the plate and guided El to the kitchen table. El sat down, and poured the syrup on her Eggos, as Hopper poured her milk. El began to stab the Eggos with her fork, in silent anxiety. Hopper watched her for a moment, before presenting an idea, to her wardrobe dilemma.

"The purple dress," Hopper said.

"Mmmph?" El said with a mouthful of waffles.

"Don't talk with your mouthful," Hopper reminded her, "and the purple dress with your black cardigan will look very nice."

El's face softened and her anxiety eased. *Of course*, she thought, *Mike likes the purple one*.

El and Hopper continued their breakfast with very little discussion. As El gathered the dishes, Hopper interjected.

"You go get ready, I got these."

El smiled and made her way to her bedroom. She laid out her lavender cotton dress, with the black cardigan, along with her

sandals. She then prepared for her shower. As the warm water washed over her, she felt blissful and happy, excited to spend some quality time with Mike.

Mike woke up earlier than usual. He busied himself around the kitchen, making sandwiches and gather picnic items into the basket. He decided that lemonade would work better than fruit punch, so he spend an hour making a batch, constantly messing up the recipe. He was a nervous wreck, for he wanted this to be the perfect date. He glanced at the clock, rushing to put the food in the fridge, so it wouldn't spoil, while he got ready.

Mike showered, taking his time, using the Old Spice soap, instead of the Dial soap. He dried off, brushed his teeth, and attempted to style his hair, with Nancy's hair gel. Since he reached puberty, his hair began to curl more, and El just loved them. He scrunched in gel, as he dried his hair, with Nancy's hairdryer, as she previously showed him. Once he got his hair to behave, he picked up the unfortunate bottle of cologne.

"Ok," Mike sighed.

He was trying to figure out how much to use. He thought of his dad, who only wore it on special occasions. Mike did the math on his head:

If it's only for special occasions, and there may be an expiration date...a fourth of a bottle should do it!

Mike doused himself with the cologne...everywhere. He sprayed it on his arms, his chest, his back, and even his hair. He then took it to his room and sprayed his clothes with it. Once he was pleased with the result, he realized he used more half the bottle.

"If this is what real men do, the more the merrier," Mike said confidently. Mike was getting more excited. He put on a nice, blue sweater and some khaki pants and did one final look in the mirror.

El's gonna love it, he thought.

Mike glided his way down the stairs, with a pep in his step. He made

his way to the breakfast table, for a light breakfast, and noticed his family was waiting for him. Karen was in the kitchen, getting Mike's breakfast together and Nancy was at the table, looking up from the newspaper. The sounds of Rainbow Bright were coming from the living room, where Holly was watching TV.

"Hey, little brother," Nancy said, "are you ready for your-"

Nancy's face contorted, with a look of disgust, as she sniffed the air around her.

"JESUS!" Nancy shouted, as she held her hand over her mouth and began to gag.

"What's wrong with you?" Mike said, brows furrowed in confusion.

"Me?" Nancy gasped, "why on earth do you smell like the inside of a funeral home?"

Jus then, Karen came in with Mike's breakfast. As she set the plate down, she stopped and stared at her son.

"M-Mike?" Karen said, trying not to laugh, "You look so handsome, sweetheart. But, don't you think you have on...enough cologne?"

Mike chewed his bacon, as Nancy and Karen stared at him, with faces that were about to explode with laughter.

"It's a special occasion," Mike argued.

"Yes, I know," Karen said, "but sweetheart...I mean...El will like you, no matter what you wear. But, sometimes...um...the atmosphere of the date...needs to be...well..."

"Breathable!" Nancy laughed.

"Nancy!" Karen snapped.

Mike sighed. Too bad his father was working, for he would have understood.

"I've gotta go pick up El's flowers," he said. Mike grabbed his basket

and went to his bike. He secured it tightly on the back of his bike and pedaled into town. He stopped by the florist, to pick up the floral arrangement. Mr. Martin's apprentice assisted Mike with making sure the arrangement was secure in the picnic basket. What Mike didn't notice was the apprentice's face, reacting to Mike's new and heavy scent.

Mike continued his way to the cabin. As he pulled up, he got more nervous. He took a whiff of himself, and he didn't smell as strong as he did earlier. He went to do the signature knock on the front door, and upon hearing heavy footsteps, that were obviously not El's, Mike got more nervous.

Hopper opened the door and towered over Mike, while in full police uniform, complete with gun belt. Mike swallowed hard.

"Wheeler," Hopper acknowledged.

"Hi, sir," Mike responded, "I-is El ready?"

"Almost," Hopper stared at Mike, "come on in." As Mike entered the cabin, Hopper gasped for air and grabbed Mike's arm, dragging him towards the kitchen.

"Jeez, Wheeler," Hopper gasped, "what did you do, bathe in a tub of perfume?"

Mike huffed, "It's cologne! I wanted to impress El."

Hopper laughed, as he ran a wash cloth under the faucet, "Oh you'll impress her alright...by giving her asthma." He handed Mike the warm, damp washcloth.

"You want me to take a bath in the kitchen?" Mike asked.

"Um, no..." Hopper chuckled, "wipe the washcloth on your skin. It will help with the...odor."

Mike did as he was told, rubbing his arms and neck with the washcloth. As he was doing so, Hopper took another damp washcloth and began wiping down Mike's sweater. "Ok, that should do it," Hopper said.

"Thank you," Mike mumbled, embarrassed.

"Eh, well...," Hopper trailed off in thought, thinking about his teenage daughter growing up. First date would turn into a second date, then a third, then a seventh...20th...then prom...engagement...wedding...

Hopper had to stop his thoughts, so he wouldn't have a cardiac episode.

"Hop," Mike said, "I promise she will have fun."

Hopper sighed, "I know, kid. Just remember what we talked about."

Mike nodded, then El appeared in the kitchen. Mike's mouth dropped open slightly, as the sight of his beloved El. He always loved her lavender dress, and her hair was curled and pushed back slightly, with a bobby pin. She had on a tiny bit of makeup, and her cheeks shimmered in the sunlight of the kitchen window.

Breathtaking, Mike thought. He crossed the kitchen, to greet her, with a warm hug.

"You look beautiful," Mike whispered.

El smiled and blushed, "Thank you. You look handsome."

As the two were sharing a moment, it was interrupted by Hopper's not so subtle cough. The two teens turned to Hopper, blushing red with embarrassment.

"Ok you two," Hopper said, grabbing his hat, "I'll be at the station all day. Don't go wandering off and stay close. If you need anything, call me at the station."

"Yes, sir," they both said in unison.

Hopper walked them out and got in his truck, driving away. Mike grabbed the basket, off his bike, and El carried the blanket. There was a field, within walking distance of the cabin. Mike thought it would be the perfect place for a picnic.

"Ready?" Mike said. El nodded and followed Mike, clinging to his

arm, as they walked.

"You smell nice," she whispered.

Mike had on the dopiest, most ecstatic grin, for the rest of their walk.

4. Chapter 4

Chapter 4

November 5, 1984

Mike gasped as he climbed out of the hole, dirty and reeked of gasoline. Lucas and Max were scrambling to get the rope steady again. Mike wanted to collapse right then and there, but he had to help Steve and Dustin up.

Suddenly, the ground began to tremble, and the ear-piercing sound of the demodogs screeches filled the atmosphere. Mike and the others crouched down, by the hole, peering down not wanting to be seen. But, it seemed the demodogs had no interest in Steve, nor the Party. Swarms of them were heading in one direction, as if there were fresh steaks on the grill.

Mike's heart began to pound out of his chest. The demodogs were hungry, but not for steak. As Mike watched those monsters pass him by, he stared on in realization. Their plan didn't work, for the creatures were headed straight back to the gate...the gate that El was attempting to close.

"Eleven," Mike said softly.

Mike then got up and rushed back to Billy's car, scarf and goggles still wrapped around his head. He didn't care, he had to get to her, before the demodogs did.

"Max, where are the keys?" Mike frantically exclaimed.

"WHAT?" Max yelled back.

"I'M GOING TO THE LAB!" Mike shouted, running to Max, trying to dig his hands through the pockets of her jacket.

"Mike!" Max attempted to pull away from him, "what the-"

Mike pulled the keys from her jacket pocket and ran towards the car, only to be stopped by Steve's hand grasping his arm. Dustin, who was

also helped out of the hole, sprinted behind him.

"Are you crazy?" Steve exclaimed, "you wanna get yourself killed?"

"If it means saving El," Mike said angrily. Mike tried to fight and release himself from Steve's grip, but Steve pulled him in close for a bear hug. As Steve held Mike tightly, Mike began to sob.

"I can't lose her again," Mike cried, "I CAN'T!"

"She's got this," Steve said, "she's gonna close it."

The Party watched on, as Steve comforted Mike. One by one, they joined Mike and Steve's tender moment, turning it into a group hug, not letting go until Mike cried it all out. Mike felt as if time stopped. For the first time in a long time, he felt loved, wanted, and supported. During his moment of weakness, a sudden wave of courage washed upon him. Mike realized he had to remain strong for El, because once the gate was closed, she would need him. Mike calmed down and broke the hug.

"Thanks," Mike said, rubbing his nose with his sleeve.

Steve nodded and patted Mike's shoulder, "Ok, you little shitheads. Everyone grab a flashlight and we're gonna see if the coast is clear."

Mike pocketed the car keys, as they grabbed their flashlights off the ground. As they walked back to the giant hole, there was a crackling pop, coming from the car. All of them turned around to notice the headlights, of Billy's car, growing brighter and brighter. Shielding their eyes, it was as if they were looking directly into the sun.

"WHAT'S HAPPENING?" Lucas shouted.

"Is he coming?" Max exclaimed, "the Mind Flayer?"

Mike couldn't comprehend fully what was happening, as he was blinded by the lights. Was it El? Was she closing the gate? Did the Mind Flayer gain power? What on earth was going on?

As the lights were still blinding on, Mike sprinted to the car, shielding his eyes and stumbling a bit, quickly climbing in and locking the

door. The others were still covering their eyes, too busy to notice Mike was missing. Mike put his seat belt on and briefly studied the gears. He then cranked up the car and sped into reverse, turning toward the exit. He noticed the Party running to catch up, Mike didn't care. He shifted the car into drive and floored it.

As Mike sped away, Steve watched on, in shock at Mike's decision, the Party standing in the darkness with nothing but their flashlights, lighting their way.

"Now, what do we do?" Dustin panicked.

Steve looked around, with his flashlight. As he walked a few feet, he noticed one of Merrill's work trucks. Steve rushed towards the truck, noticing the driver side door was unlocked. Steve frantically searched the glove box, for keys, with no success. Kicking himself mentally, for what he was about to do, Steve grabbed his pocket knife and went to work.

The Party rushed over to the truck, confused in what he was doing.

"If you shitheads ever pull a stunt like this, I will make it my mission to make sure you don't do it again," Steve said as he broke open the steering column and began working with the wires.

"Wait," Max said with a smirk, "are we...?"

Before Steve could respond, he rubbed two wires together, which started the truck.

"Cool!" Dustin and Lucas exclaimed.

"Let's go," Steve said, as they all climbed into the truck. Next stop, the lab.

Mike sped down the road way, trying to hold steady at the wheel. Given the fact he's never driven a car before, it was as if El mentally telling him what to do and where to go. Mike was relieved that no one was on the road, for he was driving in the middle of both lanes. Hands gripping tightly to the steering wheel, Mike clenched his jaw, frantic to get to El.

Mike made it to the lab, swerving down the driveway, with half of Billy's car on the road and half on the sidewalk. As Mike and the car were tilted at an angle, moving forward at a frantic speed, he searched for the door, which they had exited earlier on the evening. Not paying attention, to what was in front of him, Mike failed to notice a large, concrete pillar, and crashed the front passenger side of the car. Mike's body attempted to lurch forward, but was held tight by the seatbelts, his head hitting the side of the window. Adrenaline was pumping through Mike's veins, masking any soreness or injury from the impact. Mike's forehead was bleeding, but not enough for him to care. Mike yanked off his seatbelt and got out, leaving the car damaged against the pillar, smoking from under the hood and leaking all sorts of vehicle fluids.

Mike sprinted towards the double glass door and as he entered the foyer, he suddenly stopped, catching a glimpse of Bob in front of him, still on the floor, where they left him. Mike's throat went dry and he turned away, trying to erase the memory of Bob's body out of his brain.

"I'm sorry, Bob," Mike sniffled as he found the next door.

Mike ran to the door, that led to the long hallway, where they originally escaped. He looked around in a panic, as he was greeted by multiple doors. *Which door? Mike thought. Where would a gate to hell be?*

Mike cupped his hands around his mouth, "EL!" he shouted. He then pressed his back up against the wall, listening intently for demodogs to come rushing towards him, for a late night snack.

Silence.

"EL!" Mike continued shouting, his voice echoing against the linoleum floor, "HOPPER!"

Mike then heard sounds of a man groaning, coming from the stairwell, around the corner. Mike sprinted towards the door, to the stairs, which were already open.

"Hopper?" Mike called out.

"O-owe-," a man groaned, weakly.

"Dr. Owens!" Mike rushed the stairs and found Dr. Owens bloodied, injured, and resting against the wall. Mike looked down towards Dr. Owens leg, to see a tourniquet, fastened to it. This had to be Hopper's handiwork.

"Where are they?" Mike asked.

Dr. Owens pointed down the stairs, which Mike guessed the basement.

"We'll come back for you," Mike said, as he quickly descended the stairs to the basement. Dr. Owens groaned in affirmation.

As Mike reached the bottom, he noticed a door, that was torn off its hinges and severely disfigured, from its original structure. Fearing the worse, Mike went in, ran down a small hallway, and entered the control room. In front of him was a chain, that appeared to be rolling upward, like it was being controlled by a crank. He peered out from the glass, and saw it was a crane, ascending upward. He then noticed Hopper, holding a weak and exhausted El in his arms.

Mike began sobbing, not knowing if she was dead alive. Mike ran to the glass door, meeting Hopper, to open it for him. As soon as Hopper stepped over the threshold, Mike latched on to El.

"EASY KID!" Hopper shouted.

"ISSHEALIVE?WHYISN'TSHEMOVING?

OHMYGODWHATHAVEWEDONEWHATHAV-" Mike freaked out, as Hopper set El down in one of the control rooms chairs, El slumping over onto the control desk.

"HEY!" Hopper shouted in a whisper, grabbing Mike's shoulder, "she's fine, she's just exhausted. Jesus, Wheeler, what happened to your head?

"I uh..." Mike stammered as Hopper applied pressure to Mike's head, ripping long piece of his scrubs and tying it around Mike's head.

"Mmmmph," El moaned, music to Mike's ears. Mike rushed over and wrapped his arms around her, pulling her up to a sitting position.

"Hey," Mike whispered, tears still streaming down his face, "it's me."

"M-Mi-mik-" El stammered.

"Shhh, don't talk, just rest," Mike said.

"B-but," El continued, trembling.

"We'll get you home," Mike said, rubbing her back, "we have the rest of our lives to talk."

"Promise?" she whispered, weakly staring into Mike's eyes. Mike couldn't get over how beautiful she looked, even with blood streaking down her face.

"Promise," Mike whispered.

El nodded and collapsed in Mike's arms. Mike held her tightly, not wanting to let go. He could never let go again, for she was home.

For the first time in 353 days, Mike felt whole again.

5. Chapter 5

Chapter 5

Mike and El made the way through the woods, to a clearing, where they would have their picnic. Mike attempted to look strong, carrying the heavy picnic basket, but in reality, he was struggling. El noticed Mike's furrowed brow, and the basket slipping through his tight grip. Suddenly, Mike felt that the basket had lost about five to ten pounds in weight. He glanced over at El, who had a small grin on her face.

"You didn't have to do that. I had it held tightly," Mike smiled.

"It's ok," El said, "I wanted to help."

"I know, but this my treat to you. I don't want you to have to do things, for me, all the time."

"Mike, you were about to drop the basket," El laughed. Mike's face turned pink and he smiled at El.

"Ok," he laughed, "Maybe you can help me with some things."

As they made their way to a nice, flat spot, Mike set down the picnic basket, and took the blanket from El's arms. As she went to help Mike, he stopped her.

"Nope," Mike grinned at her, "this is something you are not helping me with. Stay right here, turn around, and close your eyes. No peeking!"

El giggled and closed her eyes, as Mike unpacked the contents. He placed everything neatly on the blanket, and then placed the beautiful floral arrangement in the middle. Once finished, Mike then took a moment to admire El's beauty. She looked so peaceful and happy, standing there in the sunlight, a smile on her face and blush in her cheeks. Mike couldn't get over how far she had come, since the night he found her in the woods. El's happiness became Mike's priority, for he wanted to make sure that she got to experience every happy moment of what life had to offer. As the gentle breeze blew

through El's long, brown curls, Mike knew today was the day.

Today, Mike would tell El that he loves her.

Of course, they had been seeing each other, but mainly low-key. Mike didn't want to rush El into saying they loved each other, and using the term lightly. To Mike and El, the word "love" had very strong meaning, never to be taken for granted. Besides, the Party and their families were much aware that Mike and El were an inseparable pair. Mike had been planning for this moment since El closed the gate. A few months afterwards, Hopper had announced that El would be joining Mike and the others, when they started high school in the fall. Mike was over-the-moon thrilled, for he couldn't wait to show off his beautiful girl to the entire school, saying "I love you" in the halls, at lunch, whispering it in class, everywhere.

That is, if El says accepts and loves him back.

"Ok El," Mike said, "open."

El turned back around and opened her eyes, gasping in delight, at the site of the most beautiful picnic, just like the ones she had seen on her soap operas. Her eyes then zoned in on Mike's floral arrangement.

"Oh Mike," El breathed, "are those flowers for me?"

Mike went over to wrap his arm around El's shoulders, gazing at her lovingly, "Do you like them?"

El hugged her arms around Mike's torso and stared into his dark brown eyes, "They're wonderful. Thank you."

Mike and El stared at each other for a few moments. Mike had the urge to kiss her, but wanted to wait until after he asked her the big question. He opted for placing a gentle kiss on El's forehead, instead.

"Come see what I brought for you," Mike said, as he guided her to the blanket. As El sat down, Mike reached for two plastic cups and filled them with lemonade. He handed one cup to El, and held his cup up, "To us," Mike said.

"To us," El repeated, clinking their cups together.

Mike began to make her a plate, complete with a sandwich, fruit, and an Eggo (of course). El brought the flowers to her face and inhaled deeply. Mike brought her plate and made one of his own, although he wasn't really hungry. Mike was too nervous about the whole date. The cologne incident didn't help matters, at all, but he did feel a bit of ease, knowing El thought he smelled nice. Mike took a few bites of fruit, opting to save the sandwich for later. He then took a long swig of his lemonade, hoping that the sweet concoction of lemons and sugar would bring him a burst of courage.

Mike looked over at El, who literally inhaled her sandwich, and was working on the Eggo. Mike couldn't help but giggle, at the sight of his hungry girlfriend.

"What?" El exclaimed, with her mouth full, "I was hungry."

Mike burst out into laughter, feeling all of his anxiety wash away. El was having a great time, enjoying every detail of their date. Mike could see the radiating happiness, flowing from El's essence, and it was because of him. The setting couldn't have been more perfect. The sun was out, the grass was a striking shade of green, and the breeze made the warm day bearable.

As Mike was collecting El's plate, to see if she wanted more food, he noticed she had a drop of mayonnaise at the corner of her mouth. Mike leaned closer to her, as El gazed at him. Trying to be romantic, he wrapped his napkin around his thumb and gently wiped it away. El gently grabbed his wrist, causing Mike to pause into El's beauty. Both leaned in closer, closing the gap between them, as Mike laid the most loving and gentle kiss on El's soft lips. El hitched her breath and welcomed the kiss, with birds chirping in the background, the atmosphere could not be more romantic. Without breaking the kiss, Mike shifted his body closer to El's, placing his hand on the back of her neck. El's lips slightly parted, causing Mike to immediately feel palpitations. They've never French-kissed before, and Mike didn't know how, so he didn't want El to see how inexperienced he was in that department. He decided to break the kiss, taking El's face in his hands instead, and placed another gentle kiss on her nose.

"Wow", El whispered, not breaking Mike's gaze. Mike swallowed hard...this was it, the moment. He took El's hands into his own, heart

pounding through his chest.

"El," Mike began, "having you here with me, these past few months, have been the most amazing days of my life. You are the light of my whole exis—"

Suddenly, Mike flinched as is felt like something bit him, on his side.

"Mike?" El asked, worried, "what's wrong?"

"Sorry," Mike apologized and took hold of El's hands again, "just a cramp. Anyway, El, what I'm trying to say—"

"OW!" El suddenly shouted, her hand rubbing underneath her knee.

"El?" Mike exclaimed, "are you o-AAAH!" Mike felt a sting on his arm and flinched again, in pain.

"OWWW!" El gasped again, "Mike, my neck...something bit me neck!"

Mike went to check El's neck, only to discover a large, red welt. He checked underneath her knee, which showed the same red welt. Mike then felt a sharp sting to his left hand and smacked at it. When he uncovered his hand, Mike immediately registered what was causing the pain.

Yellow jackets.

Mike looked around, suddenly seeing the annoying yellow bees swirling around their picnic area, and some of them crawling onto El's flowers. He then noticed where they were coming from... underneath the blanket.

"El," Mike said sternly and softly, "slowly get up and move away from the blanket."

"What?" El said, still swatting at the yellow jackets, "what are they?"

"Just do as I say and don't make any sudden movements," Mike said slowly.

El took her time getting up and slowly moving a few feet away from

the blanket, some of the yellow jackets following her. El took Mike's direction on not making any further movement, and watched her boyfriend nervously from a distance.

"Mike," El asked, "what are they?"

Mike looked over at his worried love, and got nervous, for as she looked like she was about to cry.

"Yellow jackets," Mike answered, "there are a type of bee."

"What?" El exclaimed, swatting at the remaining bees.

"Hang on," Mike said. Mike slowly got up and gently picked up one side of the blanket, which revealed more yellow jackets, swarming up towards him.

"Shit!" Mike cursed. Apparently, Mike was too busy fawning over El, that he didn't look where he had placed the blanket....directly on top of a yellow jacket nest.

Mike then panicked, which was a bad idea, as the yellow jackets swarmed around him.

"El! Run!" Mike shouted, going towards El, grabbing her hand and pulling her away from the discarded picnic and through the woods. Some of the yellow jackets followed, stinging at the back of Mike's neck and El's legs, as they ran towards the cabin. It didn't take long for them to run from the picnic site to the front door. El quickly unlocked the door with her mind, then Mike took her inside and to the bathroom, sitting her down on the closed toilet. He grabbed the first-aid kit, from under the sink, and then kneeled down in front of El, to where he was close to eye-level with her.

"Where does it hurt," Mike asked gently.

With the feeling of shock passed and tears streaming down her face, El pointed at her legs first, where Mike noticed she had been stung several times. Mike took some cotton balls and some antiseptic solution, and began cleaning the sting marks, causing El to twitch in pain.

Mike reached his hand up to El's face, gently caressing her wet cheek, "Hey, it's ok, I'm just gonna clean your legs up. Is that ok?"

El nodded in response and Mike went back to work, making sure each sting mark was cleaned. Mike then applied soothing aloe to each mark, before standing up and tending to the sting mark on her neck. Once finished, Mike kissed El softly, in attempt to calm her down.

"I'm sorry," Mike said in between short, sweet pecks on El's lips, "I'm sorry I ruined our first date."

El shook her head, "You didn't ruin anything."

"I placed the blanket over the yellow jacket nest," Mike huffed, "if I just watched where I was going, we would still be enjoying our picnic."

Suddenly, Mike remembered all of the contents they had left behind.

"Damn it!" Mike exclaimed, "your flowers!"

"Mike," El said softly, "it's ok!"

"No, it's not ok," Mike groaned as he placed his head in his hands, "I wanted this date to be perfect for you. I know you've never received flowers before, and I know how much you like them, I wanted today to be romantic and special. I'm such a screw-up, a dork! I can go back and get—"

Mike's rant was silenced by El's lips, crashing into his. After a brief moment of surprise, he returned the kiss, still keeping it sweet and innocent. Once they broke the kiss, El tucked a strand of hair behind Mike's ear.

"It's ok," El said softly, "we have all summer to go on dates."

Mike grinned at El, rubbing his hands up and down her shoulders. She then got up and took the first aid kit. Mike went to the mirror, to see how bad his bee stings were, which El doctored up the sting marks on the back of his neck. Once cleaned, she then turned him around, to tend to the stings on his hand and kissed his hand.

"Better?" El asked.

Mike responded, grinning like mad, "Better."

After they were all cleaned up, El brought Mike to the couch, where they cuddled and watched TV. Mike was upset that he didn't get a chance to tell El he loved her, but he had the whole summer to tell her. His mind immediately went to work, on the next date idea

6. Chapter 6

p style="text-align: center;" align="justify"span style="text-decoration: underline;"Chapter 6/span/p

As much as Hopper wanted to stay at the cabin, and pick at Mike for his Casanova-inspired behavior, he had bigger fish to fry. As he was driving to the station, he got a call from Callahan, regarding some protesters uprising in town./p

Several months ago, Hawkin's newly elected Mayor, Larry Kline, decided that the small, sleepy town needed to be awakened with modernization. His first order of business, a brand new, state of the art, two-story mall. While some Hawkins residents were ecstatic with the news, others were extremely angry. The residents opposing the idea of a large shopping center gave various arguments, ranging from environmental issues to noise pollution. The elderly residents were fuming, turning their walking canes into picket signs./p

As Hopper drove up to the scene of what was supposed to be a peaceful protest, he noticed a protestor trying to fight Callahan. Hopper jumped out of his truck, before it came to a complete stop./p

"Hey!" Hopper yelled, "that's enough!" Hopper grabbed the protester by both of his arms and slammed him against the truck, applying the handcuffs./p

"You can't handle me like that!" the protester shouted./p

"Yeah, well you can't assault an officer either," Hopper said sarcastically, "so I guess it's a win for me."/p

Officer Powell escorted to him the awaiting squad car, while Hopper attended to Callahan, "You ok?" Hopper asked./p

"Yeah," Callahan said, brushing off his sleeve, "he don't bite, chief."/p

Powell met up with Hopper and Callahan, as the squad car drove away, "These people are acting crazy," he said./p

"Well, Mayor Kline said they can be here, as long as it's peaceful," Hopper said./p

"Chief, look around," Powell waved his hand to the protesters, "does this look like a camp bonfire to you?"/p

p align="justify"br /Hopper took a good look around at the protesters. The mall was scheduled to open next week, and the crowds were getting more angry as opening day crept closer. What was supposed to be a peaceful protest was turning more violent. Shouting and signs, plastered with the sayings "No New Mall" and "Protect Old Hawkins" were enough to make Hopper's head spin./p

p align="justify"br /Protect Hawkins, Hopper shook his head, if only they knew./p

p align="justify"br /Hopper went to grab his loudspeaker out of his truck and hit the alarm button, which silenced the crowd./p

p align="justify"br /"This is a peaceful protest!" Hopper shouted, "Anyone that is in violation of that order will be arrested and detained." As he finished, the crowd continued their chants, and Hopper needed an aspirin. As he made his way to his truck, he was stopped by a familiar figure....one he was not fond of since the gate to the Upside Down closed./p

p align="justify"br /"Billy," Hopper said coldly./p

p align="justify"br /Billy Hargrove discarded his lit cigarette with a flick of his fingers, right near Hopper's feet, and stubbed it out with his toe. Hopper grunted in annoyance./p

p align="justify"br /"You know I can ticket you for littering, right?" Hopper said./p

p align="justify"br /"But, you won't," Billy grinned./p

p align="justify"br /Hopper glared at Billy in anger and disgust , "Watch it, kid," Hopper warned./p

p align="justify"br /"Or what?" Billy challenged, "You gonna wreck my car again?"/p

p align="justify"br /Hopper let out a large, exaggerated sigh. He was so sick of the guy./p

p align="justify"br /"We replaced your car, alright? Matter resolved," Hopper exclaimed, walking away. Billy followed and blocked off Hopper's path. Hopper rolled his eyes./p

p align="justify"br /"What, you wanna dance now?" Hopper said./p

p align="justify"br /Billy scoffed at Hopper's demeanor, "You know, it's funny how a big city cop came back to this shit-hole, and never looked back. What did you do that so bad, you had to come back here?"/p

p align="justify"br /Hopper's face turned an extreme shade of red, blood vessels ready for explode, as he just stood there, silent. Billy smirked at Hopper, knowing that he got exactly the reaction he was

expecting. It was no secret that Hopper returned after the death of his daughter, Sara, and the end of his marriage. But, Billy and the rest of the Hargrove clan had only lived in Hawkins for less than a year. Maybe Billy didn't know the whole back story./p

p align="justify"br /"Walk....away," Hopper said firmly, in a low voice./p

p align="justify"br /Billy didn't budge an inch, standing toe to toe with the tall man. Both had intense glare in the eyes, waiting for the other to move. Billy, feeling cocky and defiant, lit another cigarette, without breaking his stare into Hopper. As he took a drag, Billy blew the smoke in Hopper's face. Hopper, attempting to quit smoking for the sake of Joyce and El, didn't respond to the sudden cloud of nicotine./p

p align="justify"br /"Ya know," Billy continued, " I've noticed Joyce Byers has been clinging to you, like a leech."/p

p align="justify"br /Now Hopper was extremely pissed, "Leave her out of this," he warned./p

p align="justify"br /"Oh, so there is something between you two," Billy continued, "it's funny how her boyfriend's body wasn't even cold, that you had to step in and make a move."/p

p align="justify"br /"Watch it, kid," Hopper warned again, turning to walk away./p

p align="justify"br /"Maybe I can have a piece of that hot mama," Billy said, gyrating his hips./p

p align="justify"br /Hopper quickly turned around and grabbed Billy by the bicep , in anger. Before Hopper could make another move, Billy threw a punch to Hopper's face, as a reaction. Eventually, both tussled to the ground, attempting to fight each other. Callahan, Powell, and three other officers went to grab Billy and Hopper off of each other, Callahan then placing Billy in handcuffs./p

p align="justify""Easy there, California Dreaming," Callahan joked, as he tightened the handcuffs./p

p align="justify"br /As Callahan escorted Billy to the squad car, Billy flashed a smile at Hopper, who glared back at Billy, as the officers examined his injured eye. Hopper began to wonder what was Billy's motive and why did he care so much about Hopper./p

p align="justify" /p

p align="justify"br /The next day, Hopper, Joyce, and Mr. and Mrs. Hargrove, were sitting in the courthouse, for Billy's hearing. Billy stood in front of the judge's bench, as she reviewed Billy's charges./p

p align="justify"br /"Now, Mr. Hargrove," the judge began, "I don't have any criminal records from the time you resided in California. So, I take it this is your first offense?"/p

p align="justify"br /Billy's attorney nudged his elbow at Billy, for him to answer./p

p align="justify"br /"Yes, your Honor," Billy responded./p

p align="justify"br /"Your Honor," Billy's attorney interjected, "let me reiterate that Chief Jim Hopper grabbed at my client first and my client was just trying to defend himself."/p

p align="justify"br /She averted her eyes to Billy and his attorney "You have already made that statement, but unfortunately, there are no witnesses that can confirm Mr. Hargrove's statement."/p

p align="justify"br /"So, out of all of those people, acting upon their free speech, you mean to tell me not one person saw Chief Hopper grab at my client?" the attorney exclaimed./p

p align="justify"br /"Do you have a witness statement to present, on behalf of your client?" the judge asked./p

p align="justify"br /"Well no but-" the attorney stammered./p

p align="justify"br /"Then, I will make my ruling," the judge interrupted, causing Billy to tense up suddenly./p

p align="justify"br /"William Hargrove," the judge continued, "In the charge of assaulting a police officer, I hereby find you guilty and I sentence you to 6 months probation and 150 hours of community service."/p

p align="justify"br /"For punching a cop?" Billy exclaimed./p

p align="justify"br /The judge eyed Billy carefully, "You wanna test me, Mr. Hargrove?"/p

p align="justify"br /"Ahem," Neil Hargrove coughed behind him. Billy turned to his father, who gave him a look, that caused Billy to shiver in fear. Billy turned back around and faced the judge./p

p align="justify"br /"No, your Honor," he said softly, "please continue."/p

p align="justify"br /"As I was saying," the judge continued, "failure to comply with the sentence, will result in 90 days in jail. Court adjourned." The judge pounded her gavel and everyone got up, to exit the courtroom./p

p align="justify"br /Joyce held Hopper's hand tightly, as they exited the building. Hopper turned his head, to observe Neil gripping Billy tightly by the arm and out towards their family car. Billy looked... scared. Not of the justice setting, nor the judge's sentence, but he

looked fearful of his own father./p

p align="justify"br /"Hop," Joyce interrupted his train of thought,
"are you hungry?"/p

p align="justify"br /Hopper looked down at Joyce and smiled,
planting a kiss on her forehead./p

p align="justify"br /"I know you two are," Hopper said softly, as he
gently rubbed Joyce's protruding belly./p